

*□ Congressman Helped Secure Federal Funding for Bridge Project, Which Will Bring People from Banks of the Hudson River to the Top of Overpass; Initiative Builds on Congressman's Career Long Focus on the Hudson River*

Washington, DC -- Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that \$2.4 million in federal funding he helped secure will soon be used for the construction of a single-shaft elevator and stairway from ground level along the Hudson River to the Walkway Over the Hudson overpass. The elevator will be located on the Dutchess County side of the bridge near Water Street in the City of Poughkeepsie. Hinchey, who helped initiate the Walkway Over the Hudson project, worked to secure the money for the elevator from funding Congress approved. Hinchey previously secured \$1.35 million in federal funding for the Walkway Over the Hudson. Officials with the Walkway Over the Hudson are currently seeking bids from contractors for the construction of the elevator and stairway. A bid is expected to be awarded in mid-September.

"For nearly three years, the Walkway Over the Hudson has been the centerpiece of the Hudson Valley -- drawing in residents and visitors who have enjoyed the overpass' majestic views of what I believe is our country's greatest river," Hinchey said. "The Walkway has been an incredible success and the construction of a new elevator and stairway will allow visitors to easily move between the top and bottom of the bridge and enjoy the river from all perspectives. I'm delighted that I was able to help secure the federal funding for this elevator and stairway initiative, as well as previous resources, that have made this remarkable bridge an outstanding landmark and source of pride for our region."

The Walkway Over the Hudson is built on the 123 year old Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, which stands 212 feet above the Hudson River. Until the renovation, which repurposed the bridge for pedestrian use, the 19th Century structure had received virtually no maintenance or repairs. A 1974 fire ended its use as a railroad bridge. The Walkway's rehabilitation project included the stabilization of the walkway onto the bridge from the western shore of the Hudson River on the Ulster County side and construction of an observation deck. The 1.28 mile walkway spanning the Hudson River, which links to over 30 miles of trail systems -- the Maybrook Corridor Trail in Dutchess County and the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail in Ulster County -- opened to the public on October 3, 2009.

Bill Sepe conceived the idea for the Walkway project in the early 1990's. In 1991, the New York State Hudson River Valley Greenway, which Hinchey established as a member of the Assembly, provided \$50,000 for a feasibility study that laid the foundation for the actual

development of the Walkway. Hinchey helped build public attention and support for the Walkway project by holding two press conferences out on the bridge to demonstrate the strong potential that the old railroad bridge had for a one of a kind walkway. In 1998, under the direction of a new Board, led by Fred Schaeffer, the 501(c)3 organization, Walkway Over the Hudson, took full title to the bridge structure as well as the land underneath it on both sides of the Hudson.

In all, Hinchey worked to secure \$3.75 million in federal funds for the Walkway Over the Hudson. In September 2005, Hinchey secured \$874,000 in transportation funds, which represented the first significant contribution to the overall project and helped leverage other investments. That money was used for the Walkway's illumination. In February 2009, Congressman Hinchey delivered another \$475,000 in federal funds, which helped lay more groundwork for the \$2.4 million he worked to secure for the elevator and stairway.

To further enhance the prestige of the bridge and garner more attention for it, in September 2009, Hinchey secured the designation of the Walkway Over the Hudson as a National Recreation Trail (NRT). The designation by U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar came in response to a request from Hinchey.

The Walkway Over the Hudson is the capstone to Hinchey's 38 years of public service dedicated to protecting and promoting the Hudson River. Hinchey successfully led the fight, first in Albany and later in Washington, to force General Electric to pay for and clean up the 1.3 million pounds of PCBs it dumped into the Hudson River between 1947 and 1977. Dating back to his days as Chairman of the State Assembly's Environmental Conservation Committee, Hinchey fought against numerous attempts to delay and narrow the clean-up process, and he worked tirelessly to make sure the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency held GE responsible for the cleanup. In 2011, Hinchey visited the upper Hudson River to laud the commencement of the second and final phase of the cleanup as a critical step forward in removing PCB contamination that has plagued the Hudson River for many decades.

As an assemblyman, Hinchey authored legislation establishing the Hudson River Valley Greenway, which some have called the most ambitious greenway initiative in the nation, encompassing a portion of New York City and total land areas of counties on both sides of the Hudson River, from Westchester and Rockland counties to Saratoga and Washington counties at the northern end. Also as an assemblyman, Hinchey wrote the legislation establishing the Hudson River Estuarine Program, a comprehensive, action agenda program with goals that include protecting river scenery, waterfront revitalization, pollution reduction and promoting water quality for swimming in the river. This program has been identified by the Ocean and

Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council as a model for basin programs throughout the state.

Hinchey later built on these accomplishments, as a member of Congress, by writing and championing the passage of legislation that created the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, giving the region national prominence as well as access to increased federal resources. Another success occurred during the early part of Hinchey's career in Congress when he initiated and led the successful effort to preserve Sterling Forest, the last significant area of open space in the New York metropolitan region and an important watershed for southeastern New York and northern New Jersey. The protection of more than 20,000 acres of Sterling Forest stands as one of the greatest examples of cooperation between various public and private entities in recent history.

"As someone who spent his childhood on the banks of the Hudson River and has lived here basically my whole life, I have always fought to protect this great waterway and worked to ensure that proper attention and resources are being devoted to it," Hinchey said. "The Walkway Over the Hudson is one visible example of all the work I put in to caring for the Hudson River and I'm excited for this elevator project, which will make this bridge even more special."

More recently, Hinchey led the federal effort to support and coordinate the quadricentennial celebration of the historic voyages of Henry Hudson and Samuel de Champlain as well as for the bicentennial celebration of Robert Fulton's endeavor. Overall, the congressman secured \$1.4 million in federal funds for quadricentennial events.

And in another attempt to secure more federal attention and resources for the Hudson River Valley, Hinchey authored a bill that would authorize the National Park Service to conduct a study on whether the Hudson River Valley should become a unit of the National Park system. As part of the National Park system, the region would see an influx of tourism, additional federal resources and increased preservation efforts that would create jobs and grow the local economy.

## Hinchey Announces New Elevator Will Soon Be Built for Walkway Over the Hudson

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